WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A picture image processing method for compressing a first picture image to a second picture image, the method including the steps of:

selecting a group of a first number of pixels from said first picture image;

determining whether at least one of a second number of pixels of said group has a specified value, wherein said second number of pixels includes 2 or more pixels; and

when at least one of said second number of pixels has said specified value, setting a value of a pixel in said second picture image corresponding to said group of pixels equal to a predetermined value.

2. The picture image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said second number of pixels is equal to said first number of pixels.

3. The picture image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said first picture image includes line data.

4. The picture image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said first number of pixels corresponds to a two-dimensional region of said first picture image.

5. The picture image processing method according to claim 4, wherein said step for determining is performed by successively determining the values of pixels arranged in a horizontal direction.

6. The picture image processing method according to claim 4, wherein said step for determining is performed by successively determining the values of pixels arranged in a vertical direction.

7. A picture image processing apparatus for compressing a first picture image to a second picture image, comprising:

means for selecting a group of a first number of pixels from said first picture image;

means for determining whether at least one of a second number of pixels of said group has a specified value, wherein said second number of pixels includes 2 or more pixels from said group of pixels; and

means for setting a value of a pixel in said second picture image corresponding to said group of pixels equal to said specified value when at least one of said second number of pixels is determined to have a predetermined value.

8. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said second number of pixels is equal to said first number of pixels.

9. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said first picture image includes line data.

10. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said first number of pixels corresponds to a two-dimensional region of said first picture image.

11. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said means for determining successively determines the values of pixels arranged in a horizontal direction.

12. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said means for determining successively determines the values of pixels arranged in a vertical direction.

13. A picture image processing apparatus for compressing a first picture image to a second picture image, comprising:

a memory; and

a controller coupled to said memory and that uses said memory to compress said first picture image to said second picture image by selecting a group of a first number of pixels from said first picture image, determining whether at least one of a second number of pixels of said group has a specified value, the second number of pixels being 2 or more pixels from said group, and setting a value of a pixel in said second picture image corresponding to said group of pixels equal to said specified value when at least one of said second number of pixels is determined to have a predetermined value.

14. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said predetermined value is said specified value.

15. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said controller divides said first picture image into a plurality of said groups and performs said determining and setting steps for each of said plurality of groups.

16. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said second number of pixels is equal to said first number of pixels.

17. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said first picture image includes line data.

18. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 13, wherein said first number of pixels corresponds to a two-dimensional region of said first picture image.

19. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said controller successively determines the values of pixels arranged in a horizontal direction.

20. The picture image processing apparatus according to claim 18, wherein said controller successively determines the values of pixels arranged in a vertical direction.

21. A recording medium encoded with a computer-readable control program that controls a picture image processing apparatus to compress a first picture image to produce a second picture image by performing the steps of:

selecting a group of a first number of pixels from said first picture image;

determining whether at least one of a second number of pixels of said group has a specified value, wherein said second number of pixels includes 2 or more pixels from said group of pixels; and

when at least one of said second number of pixels has said specified value, setting a value of a pixel in said second picture image corresponding to said group of pixels equal to a predetermined value.

22. The recording medium according to claim 21, wherein said second number of pixels is equal to said first number of pixels.

23. The recording medium according to claim 21, wherein said first picture image includes line data.

24. The recording medium according to claim 21, wherein said first number of pixels corresponds to a two-dimensional region of said first picture image.

25. The recording medium according to claim 24, wherein said step for determining is performed by successively determining the values of pixels arranged in a horizontal direction.

26. The recording medium according to claim 24, wherein said step for determining is performed by successively determining the values of pixels arranged in a vertical direction.